

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE RISEN JESUS.

BY WM. WEBER.

II.

The account of the ascension, as contained in the Acts, presents particular difficulties. In the first place, it seems to be impossible to decide where the introduction written by Luke ends and where his first source begins. Westcott and Hort assign apparently the whole passage Acts i. 1-5 to the compiler. In that case, verses 3c-5 would have to be regarded as a kind of summary of Acts i. 6-8, though the review and the full text would be of nearly the same length. The two passages are certainly to a great extent parallel. Verse 3c informs us that Jesus, between his resurrection and ascension, discussed with his disciples "the things concerning the kingdom of God." According to verses 6-7 the disciples asked Jesus at their last meeting: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times and seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority." Verses 4-5 as well as verse 8 refer to the promise of the Holy Spirit the disciples are about to receive. But while the two passages agree as to these two points, they also differ from one another. Verse 4 Jesus charges his followers "not to depart from Jerusalem" until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Such an express command is not found in the second passage. On the other hand, verse 8 contains a missionary command of which no trace is extant in verses 1-5. That command, while evidently quite independent of Matt. xxviii. 19, is just as comprehensive and includes preaching to the Gentiles. That is demonstrated by the words "Samaria." For as the apostles are enjoined to go to the Samaritans, "the uttermost part of the earth" means the Gentiles.

These differences render it highly probable that our passages represent two different sources. That would be in line with the curious term "the kingdom to Israel" (verse 6) as over against

"the kingdom of God" (verse 3) as well as the two forms of the name of the Jewish capital. Verse 4 we come upon "Hierosolyma," whereas verses 8 and 12 "Jerusalem" is used.

The text of verses 1-5 offers still other difficulties. The Greek text of verse 4 begins with a participle which is translated by the Am. R. V.: "being assembled with them." But the Greek text has no equivalent for the words "with them." A literal translation would read either "while he was assembled" or "while he assembled himself," which is, of course, sheer nonsense. But it is not the duty of the commentator to hide grammatical mistakes; he has rather to face and explain them if possible. In our case, the only explanation is to see in the participle the blundering attempt of the compiler of joining together statements derived from different sources. A second objection is the sudden and uncalled-for change from indirect to direct discourse in verse 4. The Am. R. V. felt compelled to smooth away that difficulty by inserting the words "said he" into the text. In my opinion, the entire statement: "which ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence," belongs to the compiler. As he did not know any such promise made by Jesus in the name of the Father, he made words, originally uttered by John the Baptist, serve his purpose (cf. Matt. iii. 11, Mark i. 8, Luke iii. 16).

The words: "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father," require our special attention. According to them, the disciples had remained at Jerusalem after the crucifixion and resurrection of their master and were going to stay there at least until the day of Pentecost, in all a period of fifty days. From Matt. xxviii. 7 and 10 and Mark xvi. 7, however, we learn that Jesus appeared to the Eleven, not at Jerusalem, but in Galilee. We have therefore to decide which of the two conflicting traditions is historical.

When Jesus was arrested, "all the disciples left him and fled" (Matt. xxvi. 56, Mark xiv. 15). Peter alone, or Peter and an unnamed disciple, followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But even they must have fled afterward. Where could they have sought a place of refuge except in Galilee? There, at home, they were safe and able to earn a livelihood by taking up their former occupations. They had been prepared like all other pilgrims to spend the days of the Passover at Jerusalem; beyond that time, they had not the means of lingering and subsisting there. No congregation of Christians existed in that city which might have taken care of

them. Thus, the statement of the Acts that the apostles and other disciples stayed at Jerusalem during the whole time between Easter and Pentecost, must be considered as unhistorical.

It is easy enough to understand how such a tradition could arise among the Gentile Christians, who were unfamiliar with the conditions in Palestine and the customs of the Jews. All the important events which ushered in the Apostolic Age happened at Jerusalem. Even St. Paul, when he wanted to see the original apostles, went to the holy city. But that does not mean that Jerusalem, during the Apostolic Age, was the permanent seat of Christianity. It was the temple which attracted at stated seasons the Jews not only of Palestine but of the whole world to their religious capital. For that reason the Christians of Jewish descent, desiring to carry the message of Jesus to their compatriots, would naturally attend the great festivals and address their compatriots in the halls of the temple. On the other hand, whenever a man like, for instance, St. Paul wanted to confer with some of the leading Christians in Palestine, he would try to meet them at Jerusalem on one of the three great feasts (cf. Acts xx. 16). In the given instance, the disciples were to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks. For Jews who had been prevented from celebrating the Passover at the temple or staying there for all the days of the feast, were expected to return for the Pentecost festival. For that reason, it required no special order from Jesus to bring his disciples back to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost; neither was it necessary for them to remain in the city for fifty days in order not to miss that day.

Jerusalem was never a center of Christianity such as Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, etc., became later on. It is even doubtful whether there ever existed in Jerusalem a large and flourishing congregation of Christians who were natives and permanent inhabitants of the city. Jerusalem was the very stronghold of all that was reactionary in Judaism; and the permanent population was to such a degree depending upon the prosperity of the temple that, far from favoring reformatory ideas, they would do anything in order to suppress them. The fact that before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem the Christians living there left the city and moved to Pella in Perea proves those Christians to have belonged to the floating population of the Jewish capital and to have been comparatively few in number. Nevertheless, Jerusalem as the religious center of the whole Jewish world played a most important part in the early history of Christianity.

While thus Acts i. 1-5 was evidently written by a Gentile, the same is true of Acts i. 6-8, as is demonstrated by the missionary

commandment. In that commandment the term "Judea" demands our special attention. "Judea" might be another name for Palestine, signifying the country of the Jews. But in that case we should hardly expect Samaria to be mentioned expressly because it is only a subdivision of Palestine. For that reason "Judea" in our passage denotes most probably the southern district of Palestine alone. We might wonder why the other districts, Galilee and Perea, are not mentioned. But, as a matter of fact, the Acts have nothing to say about winning over to Christ people of those cantons during the Apostolic Age. Therefore, the expression "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" names the actual scenes of the missionary activity of the apostles, including St. Paul, as related in the Acts. As such the expression points clearly to either the original compiler of the book or to the editor of a second enlarged edition of the work. I am rather inclined to accept the second choice.

The question asked of Jesus: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" sounds rather strange in the mouth of the original disciples of Jesus. Their master had never pretended to have come for the purpose of restoring the national kingdom of the Jews. He promised to bring the "kingdom of God," or the "kingdom of heaven." His personal disciples, however dull and slow of understanding we may imagine them to have been, could not help but be fully aware of the vast difference between the terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of Israel" from the very beginning. The former is an idea, the latter a concrete object. According to John xviii. 36 Jesus, in reply to the question of Pilate: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" said: "My kingdom is not of this world." That statement implies that Jesus had nothing whatever to do with a kingdom of the Jews. Luke xvii. 20f a similar saying of Jesus has been preserved. "Being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said: The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here, or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." "Not with observation" means undoubtedly not in visible, concrete form. Our bodily senses are unable to perceive it. No hand can point to it. This negative definition is accompanied and supplemented by the positive statement that the kingdom of God is within us. It exists within our hearts, that is to say, it belongs to the ideal world. As an abstract term, belonging to the same category as God, spirit, righteousness, virtue, love, etc., it shares with them the quality not of being real, but of being actual.

If Jesus thought his enemies worthy of receiving such information from him, how much more thoroughly must he have discussed this very basic fact of his revelation with his intimate disciples whom he had chosen to continue his work after him. None of the Eleven could therefore have asked the risen Jesus the question of Acts i. 6. It rather bears the stamp of a later age when grossly materialistic expectations, connected with the belief in his second coming and derived chiefly from Jewish apocalyptic writings, had found favor among Gentile Christians.

A similarly materialistic conception prevails also in the closing sentence of our paragraph. In the last sentence of the first Gospel, as we have seen, Jesus consoles his disciples by assuring them of his everlasting presence. Acts i. 11 the disciples are told that Jesus who had been taken away from earth and transferred into heaven would return to them at some future time. As consolation the bereaved adherents of Jesus were offered the promise of a later reunion instead of a permanent communion.

Matt. xxviii. 16-20 as well as Acts i. 1-12 have a curious parallel in Luke xxiv. 44-53. The clause: "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the Gentiles" (Luke xxiv. 47), reminds us of Matt. xxviii. 19. The last words of the same verse "beginning from Jerusalem" refer to Acts i. 8, where Jerusalem is named as the first place at which the apostles should bear witness to Jesus. The statement: "Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49) is based upon Acts i. 4: "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father," and Acts i. 8: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." Also the locality whence Jesus ascended into heaven, is the same in Luke and Acts.

The compiler of the closing paragraph of the third Gospel has derived his material chiefly from the Acts, but he used also the first Gospel. The composer of the third Gospel and the Acts hardly possessed three different accounts of the ascension of which he added one to his Gospel while he inserted two into the Acts. The ascension inaugurates the history of the apostles. That is the reason why it introduces the relation of the deeds of the apostles. If that is right, it could not have been made, by the same person, also the conclusion of the Gospel. In other words, Luke xxiv. 44-53 must have been added to the third Gospel some time after it had been completed and published by Luke.

That supposition is confirmed by the literary character of Luke

xxiv. 44ff. It consists, far from being one organic whole, of a number of unconnected fragments. Verse 44 is an incomplete sentence, consisting of words put into the mouth of Jesus directly. A literal translation reads: "These words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning me." The Am. R. V., to make the sentence readable, has added the verb "are" and translates: "These *are* the words," etc. But as the text does not contain any words to which the demonstrative pronoun could refer, the sentence, which is complete only apparently in the Am. R. V., floats in the air.

Verse 45 opens with "then," an adverb instead of the coordinate conjunction "and," which in most cases, if not always, is characteristic of the work of a compiler or glossator. The entire sentence of verse 45: "Then opened he their mind that they might understand the scriptures," is a connecting link, joining together verse 44, which contains words of Jesus in direct discourse, and verses 46f, which is indirect discourse. (It would, by the way, be difficult to explain what kind of a process that opening of the mind was.) At the end of verse 47, the construction changes again to direct discourse with the words "beginning from Jerusalem" and continues as such to the end of verse 49. The participial clause belongs, of course, to the following sentence: "Ye are witnesses of these things." It ought to be translated: "Beginning from Jerusalem, ye shall be witnesses of these things." For the participle "beginning" is of masculine gender and in the nominative plural in our Greek text and can, therefore, in no way belong to the preceding accusative and infinitive clauses. For in that case, it would have to stand in the accusative. Even if we wanted to overlook the grammatical construction of the participial clause, it could apply only to the first half of the indirect discourse. Such things mark the seams where sentences picked up from different sources have been stitched together in an unskilful manner.

As the party who deemed it necessary to furnish what he considered a better conclusion of the third Gospel than the first editor had done, has made use of Matt. xxviii. 19 as well as of Acts i. 1-12, his work is younger than either of those passages. It would have to be assigned to a very late date, if any importance were to be attributed to the words: "Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you" (verse 49). Acts i. 4 we simply learn the disciples were to wait for the promise of the Father. Thus Luke

xxiv. 49 seems to be connected with the dogma that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son.

But all these arguments seem to be vain because we find 1 *Ap.* 50a, clear reference to Luke xxiv. 49. We read in Justin Martyr: "and having seen ascending into heaven and believed and received power sent by him from there to them and gone to them and gone to every nation of the human race." The first of these participle constructions, "having seen ascending into heaven," is derived from Acts i. 11; but the third clause, "having received power sent by him from there to them," is undoubtedly based upon Luke xxiv. 49. We must take notice, however, of the fact that the first two participles, "having seen" and "having believed," lack their direct object. It is, of course, easy enough to supply the personal pronoun "him" to "having seen." The meaning of the first clause undoubtedly is: "having seen him ascending into heaven." Still the question remains to be answered: Why should Justin have omitted that little word? That the object of "having believed" is missing is a much more serious thing. For it cannot be easily supplied. The third clause speaking of the sending of power from heaven by Christ is, to say the least, expressed very clumsily. In addition to these minor details, we must not overlook the more important fact that the close and original connection between the immediately preceding and succeeding passages is disrupted by those participles, and not only as far as the meaning of the words but also their grammatical construction is concerned. A literal translation of the entire passage with the doubtful clauses placed in parentheses will render this quite clear. "Now after he was crucified, even his disciples apostatized all and denied him. But later on, after he had risen from the dead and been seen by them and taught that it was found in the prophecies in which all those things had been foretold as going to happen—(and having seen ascending into heaven and having believed and having received power sent by him from there to them and having gone to every nation of the human race)—they taught those things and were called apostles." Before the parenthesis the genitive absolute is used in the original text, while within the parentheses the participles are in the nominative plural. For all these reasons, I feel compelled to regard the words in the parentheses as an interpolation.

There remain Luke xxiv. 13-43 and John xx. 19-29. The first of these passages consists of two parts, verses 13-35 and verses 36-43. The former section relates the experience of the two disciples that went to Emmaus. The pericope offers no exegetical diffi-

culties. It is a perfectly clear and straightforward story. There is a direct reference, however, to Luke xxiv. 1-11 in verses 23f which indicates the age of the whole passage.

The Emmaus pericope attempts to solve the problem how people could become convinced of the resurrection of Jesus who had no chance of seeing the risen Lord because they belonged to a later generation. The solution is: by studying closely the Old Testament which has foretold the suffering and resurrection of Jesus. That again points to the time of Justin Martyr.

The two Emmaus disciples were made aware that Jesus himself had opened their eyes to understand the Old Testament. It is necessary, however, to observe how the presence of their risen master was revealed to them. They failed to recognize his figure, his features, and voice. Not until he had accepted the invitation of being their guest, "was he known of them in the breaking of the bread" (Luke xxiv. 30f and 35).

The breaking of the bread of the Eucharist was a characteristic ceremony of the Christians and distinguished them from the other inhabitants of the empire. By taking the bread, blessing, and breaking it in the proper way, any stranger could identify himself as a believer in Christ among Christians. But in Palestine, it was different. For there all bread, not only the unleavened bread of the Passover, is broken even to-day, for it is baked in rather thin cakes, somewhat like our crackers. The Palestinians, therefore, had no use for the bread-knife. The head of the family takes, blesses and breaks the bread before he offers a suitable piece to each of his table companions. Where such a custom is in general use, it cannot be a distinguishing mark of any individual person. Thus our Emmaus episode belongs to the Gentile Christian world, not to Palestine.

Verses 36-43 deal with certain objections raised by opponents of the Christians. The first Christians, as they readily admitted, had indeed beheld Jesus after his crucifixion. But they could see nothing extraordinary in that fact. It was only what was to be expected. Jesus had died as a criminal. His return to his disciples after his ignominious death proved simply that he had deserved his fate. For wicked people could find no rest after death but had to haunt as ghosts the places where they had lived and practised their wickedness. Their surviving associates were the first to be thus visited. The ancients distinguished between ghosts and other spiritual beings. The former had no real body. Being merely an image, a shadow, a ghost—although visible to the eye—could

not be touched by a living person nor partake of food. Only spirits like angels possessed, besides the gift of becoming visible or invisible at will, tangible bodies which could consume and digest food. Some Christian who considered it his duty to meet and refute such slanderous objections claimed the original apostles had thought of that and been at first suspicious of the character of the risen Jesus. But the latter had dispelled quickly all their doubts and misgivings by proving to their sense of touch that his body was of real flesh and bones (verse 39) and by eating a piece of broiled fish in their presence (verses 41ff).

Our section is in all probability an even later addition to the third Gospel than the closing paragraph. We noticed in verse 44 the statement "these my words," etc., which in its present position introduces either an incomplete sentence or lacks an antecedent. If we eliminate verses 37-43 and join verse 44 directly to verse 36 "These my words," or "These are my words," would refer to what Jesus had said to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, or to what Cleopas and his companion were just relating to their fellow-disciples. Connecting verses 44-53 directly with verse 36 does not remove all the difficulties presented by our passage, but that is not to be expected in such a piece of patchwork.

John xx. 19-29 is a close parallel to Luke xxiv. 13-35. The problem is the same. The answer given is: "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed!" (Am. R. V.). The perfect tenses, "have not seen" and "have believed," ought to be replaced by the past tense. For the Greek text contains in both cases the aorist which corresponds to our past tense. Accordingly we should read: "Blessed are they that did not see and yet believed!" We expect Jesus to have employed rather the future tense and to have said: "Blessed are they that shall not see and yet will believe!" The out-of-place tense indicates simply the late origin of the whole pericope. That Thomas puts his finger into the print of the nails and his hand into the side of Jesus reminds us of Luke xxiv. 36-43. It proves the risen Jesus to have been, not an ill-boding, malignant ghost, but a spiritual being, an inhabitant of the heavenly world.

In closing this investigation, we may touch shortly upon the question of the so-called abrupt ending of the second Gospel. Mark xvi. 9-20 has been recognized long ago as a very late appendix. But the end of Mark appears to have been lost only if we compare that Gospel with the last section of the other Gospels. Now, just those closing sections for which the second Gospel offers no equivalents have been proved to be of late origin and foreign

additions to those three Gospels as originally compiled. Thus, we cannot escape the conclusion that the second Gospel has preserved its original shape and volume more faithfully than all the others. For some reason, the process of adding new chapters to the Gospels which at first ended with the death of Jesus, came to a full stop much earlier with Mark than with the other Gospels. The second to be closed was Matthew, although Luke and John must have received their final additions not very long afterward.